

Testimony on SB 1097

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I am concerned about one of the provisions of SB 1097 because the provision - section 1(b) in essence makes the evaluation system for teachers and principals a mandatory topic of bargaining with the bargaining agents for both groups.

Under present statute, the local board of education has final authority over the teacher and principal evaluation system as long as representatives of the bargaining unit involved are consulted prior to a decision being made. Section 1 (b) of the proposed bill, however, removes from the Board of Education this final authority regarding the system that will be used to evaluate teachers in every school system in the state. The authority would rest with the professional development and evaluation committee unless the committee and the Board could not agree. If that is the case, the district would be obligated to implement the state model plan.

Members of professional development and evaluation committee members, however, have no responsibility for the results achieved by a school system. Only boards of education and the superintendents whom they hire have this responsibility. The bill, then, would give authority over a school system function that is directly related to the results achieved by a school system to a body that has no responsibility for those results.

The bill would also constitute a significant departure from over thirty years of history by making moot the 1986 Wethersfield case that holds that teacher evaluation systems are not a mandatory subject of bargaining.

I support section 1(a) of the bill postponing the implementation of the new evaluation program until 2014-15 for the following reasons:

- 1) The deliberate, collaborative work to implement the Common Core and prepare for the SB assessments is a high leverage approach for improving student performance. Our teachers and leaders need to be laser focused on this work and not overwhelmed with a new evaluation system at the same time. Effective implementation of CCSS with a focus on rigor and improved instructional strategies will have the greatest effect on student learning over the long term, if done well.
- 2) We will have an opportunity to use the results of the completed Neag Evaluation of the SEED Pilot (to be completed in January 2014) to inform our new evaluation system.
- 3) It gives the SDE time to develop a systemic plan for school reform that reflects a model of continuous improvement to build the capacity of teachers and leaders. This plan should show an understanding of adult development and a logical, reasoned approach to implementation of school reform efforts including the secondary reform legislation.
- 4) SLOs will be based on SB assessments rather than CMT/CAPT in 2013-14 and SBA in 2014-15.
- 5) A postponed implementation timeline does not preclude districts from working with their teacher/administrator associations to implement portions of the new plan.

We continue to adhere to the current guidelines for teacher and administrator evaluation and continue to show improved student performance. In other words, slowing the implementation of the new plan does not in any way mean we will not be evaluating our teachers and administrators, of course we will.

We are very energized about the Common Core State Standards; we want to get it right, we don't want to stifle risk taking and innovation by applying a high stakes evaluation system now.

I urge you, therefore, not to support SB 1097 section 1(b) as it is presently written.

Please do support postponing implementation SB 1097 section 1(a). A compromise position that I would support is to allow districts to implement a portion of the plan that represents no less than 40% of the proposed guidelines, specifically, teacher practice. Investing time and resources in the supervisory skills of leaders and building capacity of teachers to implement the rigorous Common Core Standards with effective instruction is the optimal high leverage strategy to improve student performance.